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ACQUISITION REFORM: IS IT LIVING UP TO EXPECTATIONS?

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

ACQUISITION REFORM: IS IT LIVING UP TO EXPECTATIONS?

by

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

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ABSTRACT

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KEY TERMS: Rapid Acquisition, Requirements Determination, Requirements Generation, Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI), Rapid Equipping Force (REF), Joint Rapid Acquisition Center (JRAC), Combat Developer, Materiel Developer, Evolutionary Acquisition, Spiral Development

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Within the Department of Defense and U.S. Army acquisition communities this paper will examine if gaps exist between those who are chartered to accurately relay warfighter requirements to those who are entrusted to deliver these capabilities quickly and cost effectively. If there are gaps, why and how do we fix them? Next, this paper will explore if training within the acquisition community is adequate. If not, how can it be made more conducive and relevant to the current warfight? Next, it will take a look at the relatively new acquisition approaches of the Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI), the Rapid Equipping Force (REF) and the Joint Rapid Acquisition Center (JRAC) and assess whether or not these programs are of real benefit.

While the RFI, REF and JRAC are designed to deliver equipment more along the lines of Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) with little research and development involved, this paper will lastly look at how well the directive to use evolutionary acquisition to satisfy for our larger, more complex systems is working. Along the way,

this paper will attempt to address the pros and cons of each of the aforementioned issues and initiatives.

ACQUISITION REFORM: IS IT LIVING UP TO EXPECTATIONS?

> U.S. weapons are among the best in the world, but the programs to acquire them often cost substantially more than promised, take significantly longer to develop than initially thought, and often deliver fewer quantities with less technical capability than originally planned.[1]

Whether at the military service level or at the Department of Defense (DOD) level, as noted in the above quote, the Acquisition Corp's ability to provide warfighters with the best equipment available in a timely and cost-effective manner has fallen far short of expectations – and for quite a long time. Although an ambitious promise to conduct business "faster, better and cheaper," this is not easy to deliver on. Sometimes to get equipment to the warfighters quicker, the quality of the product might suffer, or the cost may go up. Maybe a different combination holds true. The possibilities are many. What is certain, however, is that the acquisition process, as originally designed, is cumbersome, time consuming and subject to hundreds of regulations and laws. Regardless of all of this oversight, the process is not a science by any means and it is still riddled with uncertainty. There will always be room for improvement in the acquisition discipline, and acquisition processes and policy always seems ripe for reform.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the DOD's acquisition model, along with several recent initiatives, and recommend changes for improving the overall process. As the organizations entrusted to equip this nation's most precious assets while engaged in persistent conflict, inefficiencies must be flushed out and quickly dealt with.

The current acquisition model was designed to work well in support of a peacetime Army under normal fiscal conditions with stable requirements.[2] Being at war

has taught us that the budgets of existing programs of record get slashed to pay for bills incurred during war, schedules are lengthened or negatively impacted, and requirements change on the fly to capture lessons learned in combat. The acquisition model is in dire need of redesign to keep pace with wartime operations. Also, training must be refined to support this new way of doing business. Do communications gaps exist between those needing the warfighting capability and those chartered to deliver it? Are the problems related to training or organizational structure? Is it process related? What is currently being done to make this lethargic system more responsive?

This paper will examine why some of these current shortcomings exist and what is being done to rectify them. First, it looks at the requirements generation and determination processes to see why the customer on the receiving end of an acquisition program sometimes ends up with a different solution from the materiel developer than what was initially expected. Next, it will look at how well training is conducted in the acquisition corps and discuss whether or not it is adequate in support of an expeditionary force. Three relatively new acquisition initiatives - the Rapid Equipping Force (REF) – a materiel fielding program that reports directly to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, the Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) which belongs to the Program Executive Office for Soldier, and the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC) will be examined to see how well these two programs are succeeding at quickly satisfying the requirements of operational commanders. Finally, evolutionary acquisition, to include incremental and spiral development will then be discussed to see how well it addresses getting capability in the hands that need it faster.

That Was Then

Prior to the start of a typical major defense program, the initiating program office must instill confidence in the program's Milestone Decision Authority (MDA) that based on their assessment of funding and risk the program has an executable timeline. On paper, this looks easy and briefs well, but a magnitude of unanticipated and unavoidable problems may loom over the horizon. The list of problems can seem endless, and as one problem is solved it is highly likely there is another one right around the corner waiting to take its place. For example, funding may be slashed or redirected to another program that is showing more promise, or the maturity of some highly-technical requirements the program was counting on to stay on schedule does not pan out. Examples of other potential problems could be that certain software security measures were somehow overlooked, interoperability issues with a program of a sister service just popped up, or the acquisition of data rights were not considered. The major problem of requirements being changed mid-stream is referred to as "creep" - in the respect that a program that is allowed to "creep" along to answer ancillary requirements not agreed to in the beginning of the program is a program that will never end. Requirements creep negatively impacts program schedules and funding lines.

Requirements Determination

Although responsible for everything under their purview, many program managers focus on their "big three:" the program's cost; schedule; and performance. Successful performance is a result of effectively meeting a program's requirements. Requirements define the acquisition program and they drive the program's cost and schedule. In most cases, requirements changes negatively impact the program's cost

and schedule. On occasion, in order to realign a program, "tradespace" will be sought between an increase or decrease to either the program's cost, schedule or performance.

Retired Admiral Dennis C. Blair contends that keeping a focused eye on developing requirements often times takes a back seat in large platform acquisition programs, and that materiel developers and combat developers begin to go their separate ways as a system develops. The combat developer represents the end user and defines the program's requirements while the materiel developer builds the materiel solution based on these stated requirements.

> The big money in acquisition goes to the long-term replacement programs that are detached at an early stage from the dynamic reality of operations and warfare. They emerge decades later with new generations of systems that are better than what they replace, but they are not as good as they could be in meeting the needs of the warrior, which will have changed significantly since the original requirements for the program were established.[3]

He posits that the current system focuses too heavily on just delivering a *platform* instead of paying equal attention to a new *capability*. "Cutoff dates for good ideas," he writes, "come very early in the development process." He suggests that there must be flexibility incorporated into our rigid acquisition processes to ensure requirements change as our missions do. This is an ironic twist to how many program managers view shifting, unstable requirements. Admiral Blair counters the notion that changing requirements cause program headaches and insists that programs can often lose relevance unless evolving requirements are considered continuously throughout the program. He laments that we do not put engineers together with operators to fix real operational problems, deal with real war plan deficiencies or emerging threats, and take

advantage of real opportunities. The reward system that drives the detached bureaucracy of requirements writers, comptrollers, and program managers, he insists, is connected only tenuously to what our forces need to operate and fight better.[4]

The successful articulation of requirements is not solely dependent on the development side of the acquisition profession, but also applies to the contracting discipline. Secretary of the Army Pete Geren chartered a commission in September of 2007 to study how the Army could strengthen its acquisition processes to keep pace with expeditionary operations. The commission, headed by Dr. Jaques S. Gansler, former Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics), produced a report titled: Urgent Reform Required: Army Expeditionary Contracting and Acquisition and Program Management in Expeditionary Operations. Of the many issues identified, the commission reported that "the complexity of defining the warfighters requirements adequately so that they can be used as the foundation of a binding contractual agreement that results in satisfactory performance for the warfighter has been overlooked."[5] In other words, this report stated that the organizations responsible for producing a materiel solution cannot do so unless the requirement can be articulated to the point of clear understanding. A clear, unquestionable understanding between the combat developer and the materiel developer is paramount to making the system work.

Because of historical cases where a materiel solution has fallen short of warfighter expectations, there is a well known rift between the acquisition community and the operational Army. This is validated in the Army Acquisition Corps Campaign Plan, where, listed as its first strategic objective is "strengthening the relationship between the acquisition workforce and the warfighter." From a programmatic

perspective, this lack of communication begs for schedule slippage and cost overrun, but more importantly it could end up shortchanging the soldier, sailor, airman or marine and there is no excuse for it. Based on an informal survey recently conducted by the Army's Acquisition Support Center with more than 200 battalion and brigade commanders, the commanders responded that they want to be heard and be more involved and would welcome a timely feedback mechanism with the materiel developer.[6] The acquisition community must earn the Warfighter's trust and respect by developing cohesion between the two communities and conveying this message to the rest of the Army and beyond.[7]

Training

Among its many cogent points and findings, the previously mentioned Gansler Commission report points out that today's expeditionary operations requires a significant overhaul of the Acquisition Corps in terms of adding certified and qualified contracting personnel. Never before has the role of those with contracting credentials in the Acquisition Corps been so critically important. This is a new paradigm shift in the way we conduct business and is a hard reality that is clearly here to stay. The Gansler report asserts that the management of contracts post award in an expeditionary environment is a pivotal function that is currently being looked at as a "pick-up game." The report states that the Army has no trained resources to monitor and ensure the contractor is performing and providing the services they were contracted to perform. Because of the lack of this function, the environment is ripe for fraud, waste and abuse.[8]

The commission found that despite an approximate seven fold increase to an increasingly more complex workload, instead of developing contracting skills to meet

the challenge, just the opposite held true – that the workforce was either stagnant or declining. In fact, the report revealed that only 3% of Army contracting personnel are military, and that only 38% of the Army's contracting workforce is certified or qualified for the positions occupied. The commission stated that the Army did not yet recognize the impact of contracting and contractors in expeditionary operations and that contracting should be a core capability of the Army, not treated as "an operational side issue." This finding, the commission reasoned was only made more obvious by the fact that there are no longer any Army contracting career General Officer (GO) positions.[9]

Not only did the report discuss the Army Acquisition Corp's internal weaknesses and need to transform, it also discussed a need to do a better job training our commanders on the added value of contractors on the battlefield, so they can understand the implications contractors have in their battlespace in terms of operational and logistical planning considerations. Also, the report suggested that the role and importance of contracting in expeditionary operations should be taught at command schools like the War College, CGSC, the Officer Advanced Courses and the Sergeants Majors Academy.[10]

In addition to the acquisition workforce struggling with the adaptation of new skills required for an expeditionary force, the projected loss of many highly experienced professionals is looming large. The civilian acquisition workforce currently consists of 76 percent of soon-to-retire "baby boomers." As this generation retires, recruiting skilled personnel will present a challenge for the Department of Defense as competition between government and industry for new hires will intensify.[11] In the July-August issue of Defense AT&L (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology) Magazine, former Army

Acquisition Executive Claude M. Bolton answered the question, “What is your greatest challenge to improve leadership and competitiveness?” by stating:

> I have three words: education, education, education. Our workforce focus is to develop flexible acquisition officers and civilian leaders who possess a diverse and well-rounded background, who can effectively support all phases of acquisition. It takes time and a substantial investment of resources to develop the required depth of experience. The looming exodus of expertise resulting from pending retirements within the next three years keeps me awake at night. [12]

During the early 1990s, mainly due to the rapid success realized in the Gulf war, Congress directed a reduction in the size of the acquisition workforce. Some might argue that today, due to the difficulty being experienced in Iraq, the mindset of the early 1990s should be reversed and the acquisition community should be increased. The Gansler commission found an ever-increasing workload, and contends that the cost of increasing the workforce would be quickly absorbed by costs saved in fewer cost overruns. In addition, supporters for increasing the workforce could argue better preparedness for future expeditionary operations.

The acquisition community needs to relook the way we currently do business. As it is designed right now, the Acquisition workforce, by in large, works in isolation. There is a significant lack of what is often referred to as “cross fertilization” between team members. Contracting personnel need to learn how to collaborate with budget analysts and logisticians. Requirements agencies need to be able to communicate with engineers. It is time to learn how to work in teams - as an organization. If Acquisition professionals are to become more knowledgeable about their business and help the Army move into the information age, they need to better learn and understand not only their own jobs, but the responsibilities of the other key members on the team.

The acquisition workforce consists of professionals in 11 different career fields who perform the budgeting, facilities engineering, research, development, testing, evaluation, contracting, life cycle logistics, fielding and sustainment of all warfighting systems. Because of the lengthy list of diverse talents required to make up an acquisition team to perform acquisition functions, the acquisition workforce must learn to train collectively. Many program management offices are currently organized where each specialty: engineering, logistics, finance/budget, etc., belong to a different management structure and chain of leadership, and only matrixed out to work for a program manager. This "stove-piping" is not effective in terms of teamwork. The Acquisition Corps must learn to train collectively as a team.

The Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI)

The RFI is a stellar example of spiral development. In RFI developing technologies are selected to bring them to a point where they can be useful to the soldier today instead of years in the future.[13] RFI, as its name suggests, is also a great example of rapid acquisition. This program has provided millions of articles of mission-essential equipment to deploying Soldiers and units in a matter of weeks and months, instead of the months and years characteristic of the traditional long acquisition process.

LTC Dave Anderson spent a decade in Special Operations before serving as the Product Manager for the RFI. He leveraged his contacts in the Special Operations Community and, based on lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan and information gleaned from numerous interviews conducted with soldiers returning from these operations, he was able to develop a list of specific equipment that would make a

positive difference in combat. Funding was reprioritized from the traditional Central Funding and Fielding (Operations and Maintenance) account that the PM received annually to outfit the force. Using temporary space he acquired on Fort Bragg, LTC Anderson and his PM shop set up an equipment issue station to hand out gear to the soldiers getting ready to deploy.[14]

In December of 2002 Product Manager for Clothing and Individual Equipment (PM-CIE) distributed the first load of boots, helmets, load carriage, hydration systems, weapons accessories, urban warfare tools and other items. While fielding equipment to those deploying, contact teams were established to seek out those units next in sequence to deploy to determine their specific needs. According to each unit's anticipated missions, the list was further refined and the PM satisfied the list as best it could given the funding constraints of the time. As RFI gained momentum based on the glowing reviews it was receiving from warfighting commanders who received this equipment prior to deployment, the RFI mission was taking too heavy of a burden on PM CIE's traditional missions and programs. Because of this the RFI program was put under the direct supervision of the PEO and a RFI team was established to manage the supply and distribution of items on the growing list – which contains about 76 essential items.[15]

The Rapid Fielding Initiative also shows how important "initiative" and "thinking outside of the box" can be in getting the right equipment to the right people at the right time. This program also shows how important communication is in the acquisition business. What started as a wartime effort, has become the foundation for the systematic and cyclical approach to funding, assessing, adjusting and sustaining soldier

equipment. On average, RFI fields equipment to nearly 22,000 soldiers at 14 fielding sites worldwide each month and as of December 2007, the RFI has equipped over 1,000,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen.[16]

The Rapid Equipping Force (REF)

Established in October 2002 by the Vice Chief of Staff for the Army (VCSA), the REF is another highly successful effort that is getting critical equipment into the hands of service members quicker than the normal acquisition cycle. Army Colonel Gregory Tubbs, the Director of the REF, describes REF as "acquisition on steroids." "The REF identifies an immediate warfighting need, seeks out the best way to meet it and quickly gets the technical solution into the hands of the people who need it."[17] The REF works directly with deployed operational commanders and often includes frequent soldier-canvassing to help discover soldier desires and capabilities gaps. Major Paul Craft, a member of the REF in 2002, explained that the REF operated with the mindset that the REF's mission "was not business as usual. We could not afford to use the same direct memorandum format that goes from office to office to office to get stamped and sit in someone's inbox for even a day. A day is too long."[18]

One of the key differences between the RFI and the REF is that the REF looks at more "cutting edge" equipment to include robotics and handheld airplanes for reconnaissance missions. Another key difference between the two is that the REF conducts much of its business, to include the experimentation and evaluation of key technologies, in theater under operational conditions. For example, in the summer of 2002, during Operation Enduring Freedom, the REF delivered operational robots, known as PackBots, to Afghanistan within 27 days of project approval. These robots

helped clear 34 caves, buildings and compounds in their first four combat patrols. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, the REF was able to bring a critical capability to counter remote controlled improvised explosive devices to the forces in Northern Iraq within three days from the receipt of a warning order.[19]

The REF does not look to solve operational problems by developing a solution from scratch, but rather seeks to leverage already existing technology. Many times a REF solution may consist of modifying an existing Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) product for military application. The REF has so far provided over 87 different types of equipment, providing more than 15,000 items to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom units and, based on the success of its efforts, the Army senior leadership directed that the REF be expanded and institutionalized as an independent activity taking operational guidance from the G–3/5/7 and reporting directly to the VCSA.[20]

The Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC)

Piggy-backing off of the success of the REF, DOD formed the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC) in September 2005. The JRAC is chartered to "break through the institutional barriers of providing timely, effective support to global war on terrorism (GWOT) operational commanders."[21] According to the establishing directive, the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, and each of the services will appoint an individual to support the cell who is empowered to act on behalf of their organization. The cell self-imposed a 48 hour turn-around time to act on incoming requests recieved via email. "Rapid" is the new cell's watchword, and according to Bob Buhrkuhl, Director of the JRAC, the cell's goal is to act on requests for immediate warfighter needs. Officials

hope to ensure that a contract is awarded and the goods and services delivered within four months.[22] For requirements to be validated by the JRAC, a general officer and the Joint Staff must approve the request. If disapproved, the requester receives automated feedback explaining why.

Although the RFI, REF and the JRAC have separate missions and charters, all are helping to move the acquisition process out of a bureaucratic traffic jam and into the passing lane of getting warfighting capability into the hands of those who need it to fight, survive and win. Although all three initiatives operate at different levels and answer to different chains of command, one thing is important to note, all three are highly successful due to constant and continual dialogue between those providing the equipment and those using it.

Evolutionary Acquisition

Evolutionary acquisition is a new practice being used in the DoD that steps outside of the traditional acquisition process by acquiring and fielding materiel capability via an iterative process. As the chosen technology matures to the point where it can be usefully leveraged, it is then inserted into the project's baseline. The objective of evolutionary acquisition is to balance needs and available capability with resources, and to put capability into the hands of the user quickly. Success of this strategy depends on consistent and continuous definition of requirements and continuous collaboration between the user, tester, and the developer to develop and produce systems with increasing capability towards a materiel application.[23]

Evolutionary acquisition encompasses two key processes - incremental development and spiral development. Through the incremental development process, a

desired capability is identified and the required end state is defined. The capability is then grown over time as the technology matures and ends up consisting of several increments. In spiral development, the end-state requirement is unknown at program initiation and the effort is refined as the process continues based on experimentation, risk management, technology maturation and continuous input from the end user. Spiral development is a much more fluid process than incremental development. A constant in each of these processes is the strengthening of a weakness discussed earlier in this paper – that of user feedback. In both of these processes, success is very much dependant on continuous involvement by the user. Both incremental and spiral development also require close coordination between the materiel and training developers to ensure the right training products and plans are developed to support the new capabilities provided.[24] In addition, by going with this approach, defense contractors now have the flexibility to incorporate new technologies into new weapon platforms and systems, rather than delivering solutions using only those technologies that existed when the systems were initially designed.[25]

Recommendations

Being at war in Afghanistan and Iraq for over five years has helped illuminate many long-standing shortcomings in the Acquisition Corps. Had these weaknesses not been forced to the top due to the Acquisition Corps' current struggle to keep pace with and support the operational force, a plan to fix many of these very-fixable issues might have stayed buried for many years to come. The Gansler commission study and its findings lay the initial groundwork for a sweeping get well plan.

Requirements Determination

Acquisition professionals need to ensure that the warfighters remain deeply involved in the acquisition process from the program's inception. Often times, as a program continues to evolve, the end user or customer is ominously absent when it comes to determining the status of or reviewing progress on requirements, and more and more the Acquisition community is starting to make decisions on issues outside of the materiel developer's lane. This communications gap is a longstanding problem. According to research from more than a decade ago,

> The using command, responsible for writing the requirement, was limited in defining some of the specifications in the requirements document. This resulted in problems where operational needs were not properly transformed into contract specifications. The using command was also not involved in many of the cost – schedule - performance tradeoffs. This resulted in cases where critical operational capabilities were traded off to meet a program's schedule or to reduce costs. The bottom line was that there was not enough operational perspective in the acquisition process and new systems were not meeting operational needs.[26]

Secretary of the Navy, Donald Winters, sees removing communications impediments between acquisition personnel and those who eventually use the equipment or capability provided as a key step in correcting some of the requirements shortfalls. "Operators are in the best position to determine what's operational suitability," he points out. "We need specifications that are informed by those who understand the consequences and are naturally vested in the outcome of the acquisitions. We need to bring back synergy among operators and acquisition personnel."[27]

Perhaps to help mitigate this long standing issue, the combat developer could take a more active, formal role at program decision reviews, milestones or meetings that take place at the level requiring the attendance of the Milestone Decision Authority

(MDA). As a representative of the organization responsible for not only writing the requirement, but ensuring that the requirement has developed and matured as the program has progressed, he or she should be required to report on the status of how well their requirements are being met by the Program Manager. If the requirements are being satisfied, then he or she should report accordingly. On the other hand, if the requirement has not been met, this person should be required, in the audience of the MDA, to explain why. Also, if the program manager is at the 05 level, then the signature of his or her counterpart from the combat developer's organization should be on the Acquisition Decision Memorandum (ADM). The same applies if the program manager is at the 06 level.

Another possible course of action to ensure that the combat developer and the materiel developer continue to dialogue throughout the course of an acquisition program could be to institute a policy where they are either both rated by the same individual, or if that is not possible, at a minimum, the MDA from the acquisition organization could provide a letter of input to the combat developer's rater or senior rater.

Also, not only are strong communications between the combat developer and the materiel developer pivotal for program success, consistent communications are just as important. Therefore, another complimentary option for consideration could be to formalize a policy where the combat developer and the materiel developer work together for a minimum period of time – maybe a year to eighteen months. This could help mitigate the issue of the quick turnover of personnel throughout a program's development and pay big dividends if implemented.

Training

According to the Gansler Report “over half of the personnel currently in Iraq and Afghanistan are contract employees. This puts Army contracting (writing, negotiating, monitoring, and achieving accountability and enforcement of the contracts), along with modern (information-based) logistics support, squarely at the forefront of our challenges in supporting expeditionary operations.[28]

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) recently started to restructure its training from that of the traditional classroom to interagency group instruction. Says Lenn Vincent, a retired Navy rear admiral and professor at DAU “we train as individuals but now we also need to train as we fight in groups, as an organization. That’s where we are going to go and get cross-functional performance driven training. We’ll bring the whole program management team to train together.”[29]

According to retired Admiral David R. Oliver Jr., a member of the Gansler Commission, there needs to be a new infusion of qualified talent into the acquisition workforce because we are currently in a period where serious talent is lacking. He contends that in order to fix the current situation, military members should not request to be in the Acquisition Corps, but that the “larger Army” should select the individuals to fill acquisition positions. In other words, the soldiers assigned would not have a choice – it would not be voluntary - they either worked in the acquisition corps or were not allowed to be in the service. He explained that “we all serve the higher purpose, and it should not be a matter of the individual really having a say.”[30]

As we continue to move into an uncertain future that brings with it new battlefield challenges, embracing and harnessing technology for potential advantage in combat is key. Therefore, the acquisition workforce must be savvy in understanding technology

not only in order to ensure our soldiers are being best equipped, but also to ensure that we are getting the best bang for the buck. LTG Joseph Yakovac, when he was in the position of Military Deputy to the Army Acquisition Executive in 2003 repeatedly spoke on his concerns of the Army workforce's ability to manage increasingly complex military systems as we transformed into high-tech digital units. He readily spoke on feeling comfortable with the Army's acquisition workforce ability to purchase large military systems like tanks, but less comfortable acquiring the latest information and communications technologies.[31]

Another approach that should be considered to help strengthen acquisition training is the use of gaming technology to help make acquisition training fun along with challenging. Being engaged in Iraq has certainly surfaced quite a few issues regarding the AAC's inability to "keep pace" with the current force in terms of support. A game that offers solutions to time-sensitive acquisition problems through realistic scenarios could be very useful. For example, a requirement comes in for some highly-technical, state-of-the-art type of equipment, the game could point to how we search various databases/sources of information to see if the capability exists. If not, then what do you do? Then this game could detail various acquisition approaches and explain the reasoning and utility of each to include the pros and cons. Things like this are taught in classrooms, but nothing in the form of games where soldiers or civilians can engage in the privacy of their own homes on their own time.

The Rapid Equipping Force (REF), the Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) and the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC)

These innovative programs have all been extremely successful in meeting their intended goals of getting equipment into the hands of our warfighters very quickly. In

order to do this, the proponents of all of these programs maintain a forward leaning prospective, often approaching the soldiers in an attempt to determine what is needed by aggressively pulling information, unlike the normal acquisition process of soldiers having to request materiel solutions via drawing up compelling needs statements. Also, due to the low-tech nature of these items, many are available via the commercial market (commercial off the shelf (COTS)) or may only require very minor modifications. Therefore, these programs can easily side-step the traditional acquisition process requiring multiple testing events. In what used to take years, many of these products can now be delivered in 90 to 180 days.

Evolutionary Acquisition

Like REF, RFI and JRAC, one of the intentions of evolutionary acquisition is not only to provide capability quicker, but to insert flexibility and efficiency into the process. It is evolutionary in the sense that the changes are incremental instead of one long, large acquisition. In addition, this process is similar to the smaller scale programs in that evolutionary acquisition relies very heavily on wide open communications between the program office and the contractor.

Evolutionary acquisition or spiral development is not the way to proceed with every new program. The characteristics important for consideration regarding spiral acquisition are: large proportion of commercial technology or previously developed military technology; a desire to shorten technology insertion life cycles; schedule urgency; flexibility in requirements for later insertions and budgetary uncertainty.[32] To date, it is working well for the DOD acquisition community's methodology for managing its large, technologically heavy programs.

Conclusion

Although the list of needed improvements in the DOD and Army organizations are too numerous to tackle within the confines of this paper, being at war for the past six years has brought many of the most prominent shortcomings to surface. If nothing more, this paper has illustrated that no matter the organizational level or level of complexity within an acquisition program, continuous communications throughout the program by all stakeholders, is essential for success. Without it, programs and projects may veer off on one-way paths. Successful programs are largely a result of steady communications which result in well understood requirements.

Training within the acquisition corps needs to be revised to be more realistic with the operational environment. Today's operational environment requires agile contract vehicles and contracting practices to keep up with expeditionary operations. The acquisition corps' current contracting practices are lethargic and require new computer programs to help automate processes. The Gansler report notes this weakness in several places throughout. We also need to practice more innovative methods to work as a team and begin to learn the functions of those on our left and right. .

> Expeditionary forces need information technology and eBusiness tools. Expeditionary contracting personnel feel that they are years behind other OCONUS locations with technology, yet they are working in an environment where the operations tempo demands the support of automated tools. Contract writing systems are insufficient and not standardized, negatively impacting the ability to accomplish their mission.[33]

The RFI, the REF and JRAC are performing superbly and the Army and the Joint Forces leadership are getting it right. The methodology in all three is simple – take equipment our fighting men and women have identified they need, test it for safety and durability, ruggedize it if necessary, and give it to them. It is high time the armed

services lived up to the promise of using “good enough,” and you can rest assured that feedback from the troops on the suitability of the equipment - good, bad or indifferent - will be right around the corner.

Regarding the larger products and platforms, evolutionary acquisition is the most recent attempt at bringing flexibility back into the process. Evolutionary acquisition, when it is applicable, can be a great way to introduce and use residual capability mature enough to leave behind for important use while the rest of the program continues to remain focused on the farther goal. If the larger requirement, for some reason, does not materialize, the chances of some worthwhile capability being left behind is a great thing, especially when you think of some of the larger programs of recent history that folded up with nothing to show after many years of effort and millions of dollars spent. The Army’s Comanche and Crusader Programs are two that quickly come to mind.

In terms of providing needed capability as quickly as possible, it is clear that the acquisition community is attempting to do the best it can under trying circumstances. Fiscal scarcity and scrutiny abound, as well as concerns regarding a dwindling workforce, all while at war with two countries. This is not the best scenario for instituting changes, but trying times do in fact call for trying measures. Flexibility and responsiveness need to be built into the current process to prepare us for future uncertainty. The Gansler Commission Report is a great get well plan that has the eyes of this nation’s most senior leadership on it.

The lethargic acquisition model, redesigned based on some of the Gansler commission principles, such as strengthened communications between developers and end-users, and more focused training, coupled with the best practices of the rapid

acquisition models, will go a long way to providing the warfighter with needed capability in a timely manner.

Endnotes

[1] "Missing Ingredient: Put Acquisition Managers Under Control of OSD, Reduce Service Link," *Defense News*, 13 August 2006, available from http://integrator.hanscom.af.mil/2006/August/08312006/08312006-24.htm; Internet; accessed 14 February 2008.

[2] For the purposes of this paper the term acquisition model refers to the entire Army Acquisition process (also known as the Army Acquisition Framework). This includes every event that takes place in the development and fielding of a product from concept development on one end of the spectrum to disposal of the product (or service) when it no longer has any operational utility. The model can be viewed in a chart form from the Defense Acquisition University at http://www.dau.mil.

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[9] Ibid., 9.

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